Healthy Aging for All In the 21st Century - Seniors Profile

GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND
AND LABRADOR

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Aging and Seniors Division
Department of Health and Community Services
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Cover Photos

© Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (Woman and child)

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- Thanks also to the Mount Pearl Seniors' Independence Group.

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INTRODUCTION

Healthy Aging for All in the 21st Century - Seniors Profile is a companion document to the ***Discussion Paper*** of the same title. It provides the reader with information through charts, tables, statistics and written information to help us create a rich and comprehensive picture of our aging population. This profile is presented in a similar fashion to the discussion document. We first provide demographics to show what our population looks like. This is followed by information categorized by the five themes identified in the discussion document. It is a beginning profile meant to stimulate our thinking about how we imagine a "Healthy Aging Framework".

DEMOGRAPHICS

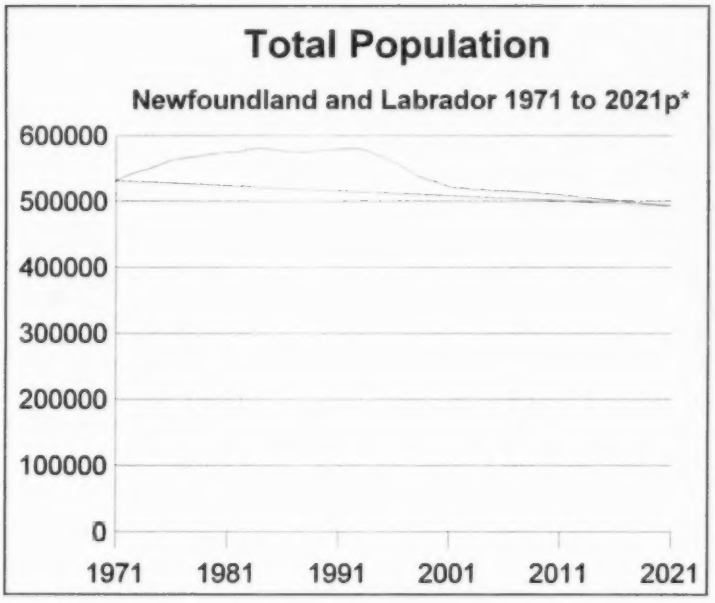
This profile begins by exploring what our aging population looks like.

Seniors[1] currently comprise approximately 13.4 per cent of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador. Some 68,800 seniors are among our total population of 514,000. It is interesting to note that today over a third of the population is over 50 years of age.

Current Population Estimates (2006)

Province:		514,000
Population 50+:	35.1%	180,300
Population 65+:	13.4%	68,800
Population 75+:	6.0%	30,600
Population 85+:	1.5%	7,700

Source: Statistics Canada;
Economics and Statistics Branch, Department of Finance



*p=projection.

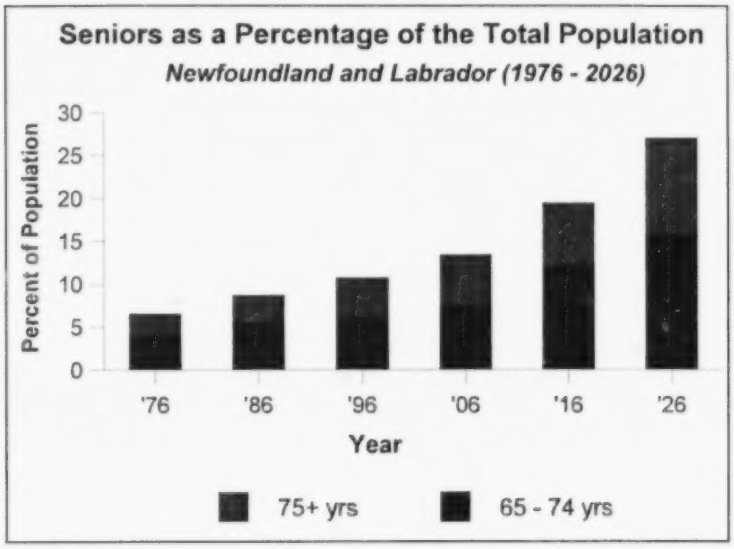
Source: Economics and Statistics Branch, Dept. of Finance; Statistics Canada

When we look at the overall population, we can see changes since the 1970s and also anticipate changes.

The graph on the left shows the population changes from 1971 to 2021. The year 1992 was a high point at which the population reached some 580,000. Since then, it has declined to its current estimated population of 514,000.

[1]Please note that in this document, the term "senior" refers to adults 65 years of age or more.

It is important to note that all Canadian provinces are currently faced with an aging population. The proportion of seniors in Canada and in our province is continually increasing. By 2016, seniors will represent almost 20 per cent of the provincial population. By 2026, it is projected that 27 per cent of the total population will be over age 65. Further, twelve per cent will be over age 75. The table to the right shows this trend since 1976.



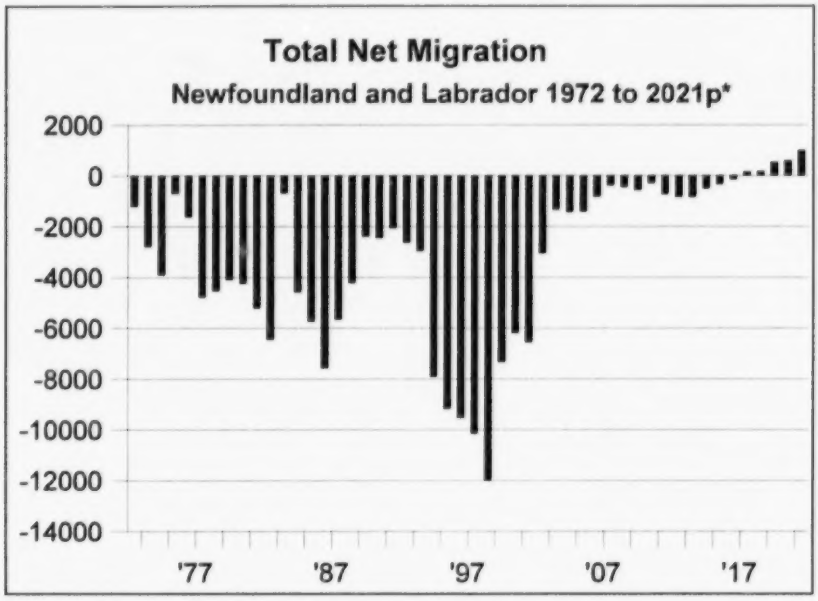
Source: Economics and Statistics Branch; Dept. of Finance
(Medium Scenario as of Jan. 2004)

Another way of conceptualizing the aging phenomenon is in terms of the median age of the population. The median refers to the point at which half the population is below a certain measure and half the population is above that same measure. In 2004, approximately 50 per cent of the population was under 40 years of age and 50 per cent was over 40 years of age. It is projected that fifteen years from now, in 2021, half the provincial population will be over the age of 49.

Our population is aging faster than it is in the rest of Canada. Three main factors are contributing to this trend. The overall aging of the population is attributed in large part to increased life expectancy. In 1951, the life expectancy at birth, for both sexes, in Newfoundland and Labrador was approximately 68 years of age. By 2001, it had increased to approximately 78 years of age. This compares to Canada overall, where life expectancy was 80 years in 2001.

Another factor that accounts for the high proportion of seniors in our province is the low fertility rate. In Canada, generally, the fertility rates have been in decline since the baby boom ended in the mid-60s. However, our provincial fertility rate is even lower than it is in Canada overall (1.3 children versus 1.5 children, respectively, per woman aged 15 to 49, in 2004).

The third factor contributing to the aging of the population is the high rate of out-migration, especially among young people of child-bearing age in our province. The chart below shows the net migration from this province. As you can see from this chart, the trend toward out-migration will continue until 2017.

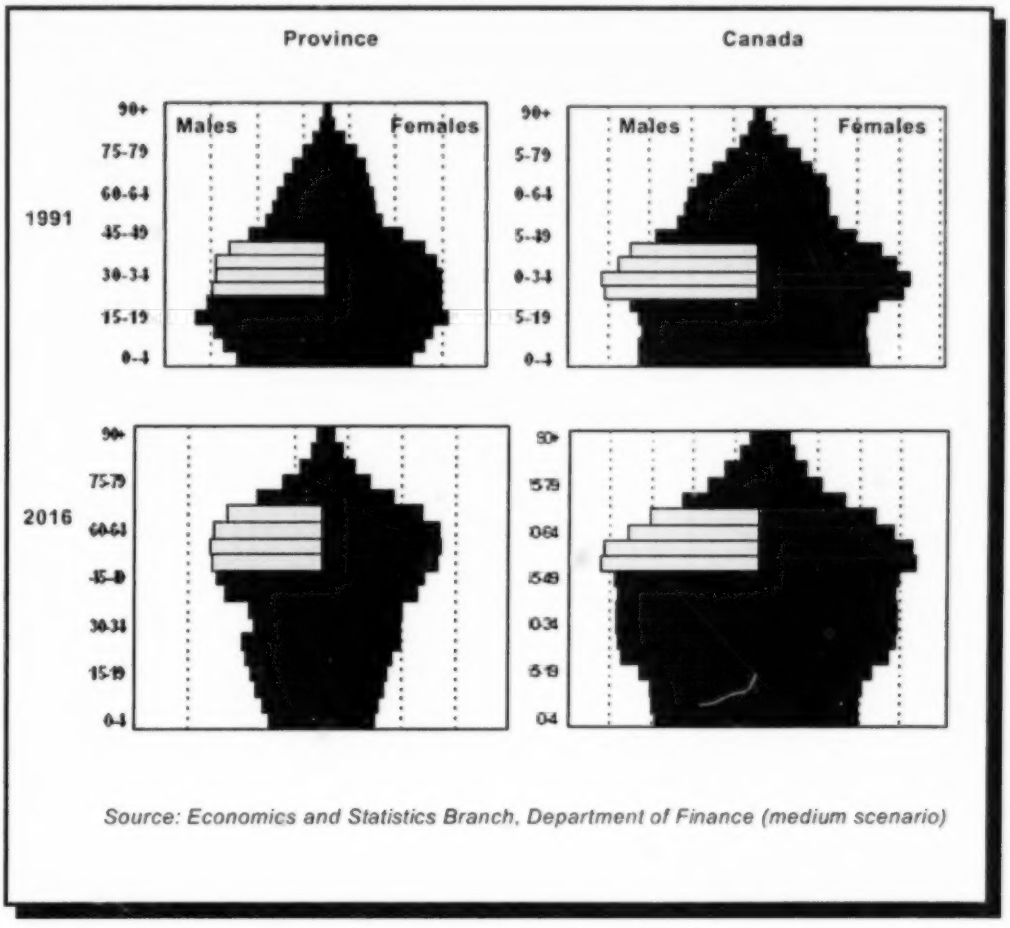


Source: Economic and Statistics Branch, Dept. of Finance; Statistics Canada

*p=projection.

Again, as a result of these high rates of out-migration, and low fertility rates, the proportion of seniors in our provincial population has increased much more rapidly than any other province in the country over the last 30 years. According to Statistics Canada predictions, Newfoundland and Labrador will have the highest proportion of individuals over the age of 65 in the country within ten years. By 2016, seniors will represent almost 20 per cent of the provincial population, whereas in Canada, seniors will represent approximately 16 per cent of the population.

The following pyramids display the increasing number of seniors expected by 2016, as well as the continued decline in the provincial population. For 1991 and 2016, the Canadian demographics present in a pyramid shape, as do those of Newfoundland and Labrador for 1991. However, the visual presentation of the province's demographic projections for 2016 takes on the form of a 'spin-top'. As you can see, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador will have a smaller proportion of youth compared to seniors.



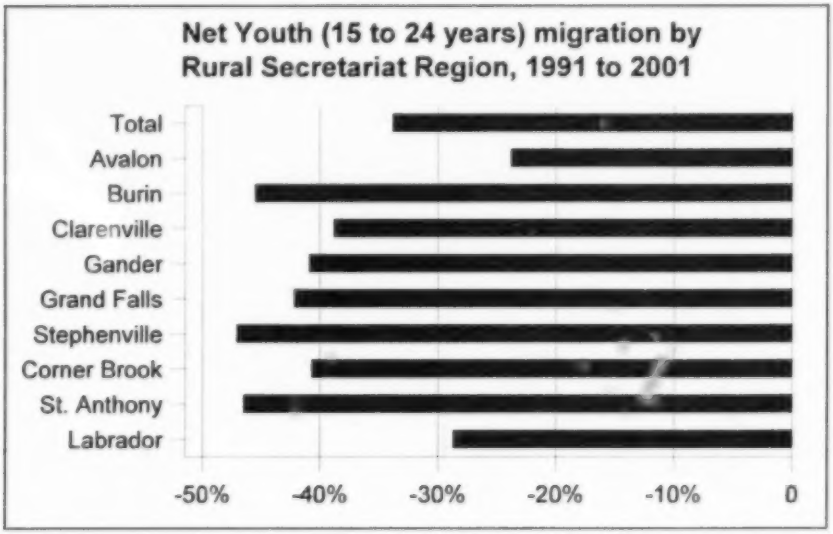
Source: Economics and Statistics Branch, Department of Finance (medium scenario)

Let us now look more closely at the aging population within the province. The proportion of the population over 65 is fairly consistent across the province. However, there is some variation, particularly for Labrador. There, seniors account for 6.2 per cent of the population, whereas on the island portion of the province seniors account for 13.1 per cent of the population.

Current Population Estimates (2006)

Rural Secretariat Regions - Proportion 65+:		
Avalon Peninsula:	12.2%	29,856
Burin Peninsula:	12.0%	2,711
Clarenville-Bonavista:	15.2%	4,548
Gander-New-Wes-Valley:	16.2%	7,786
GFW-B. Verte-Hr Breton:	16.2%	8,388
Stephenville-P. aux B:	15.1%	4,781
Corner Brook-Rocky Hr:	15.1%	6,901
St. Anthony-P. au Choix:	15.1%	2,148
Labrador:	6.2%	1,696

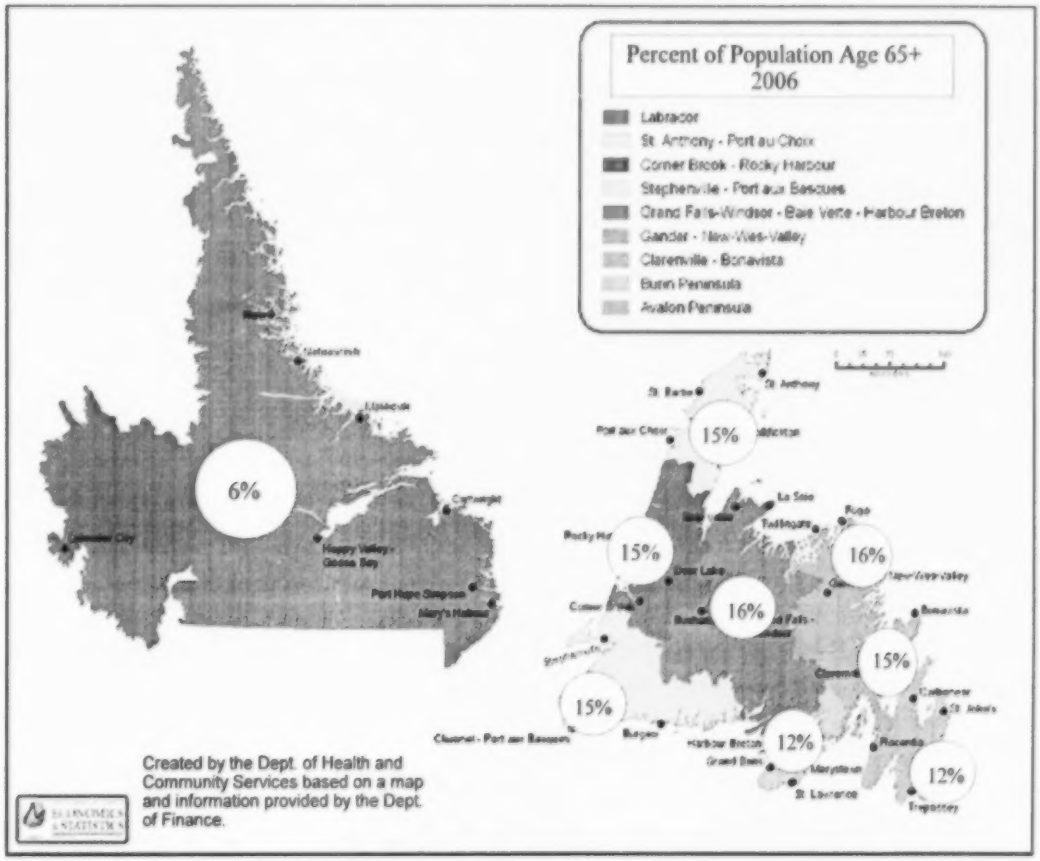
Source: Economics and Statistics Branch, Department of Finance



Source: Economics and Statistics Branch, Department of Finance

It is expected, however, that regional differences in the distribution of the seniors population across the province will be more significant in the coming years. The aging trend is expected to be more pronounced in rural areas of the province as youth migrate from these areas. The graph above shows the net migration of youth for the various rural secretariat regions from 1991 to 2001. As you can see, in the St. Anthony-Port au Choix region, the net out-migration of youth is 46.5 per cent.

The following maps provide an indication of the current (2006) and projected (2021) distribution of the seniors population throughout the province.



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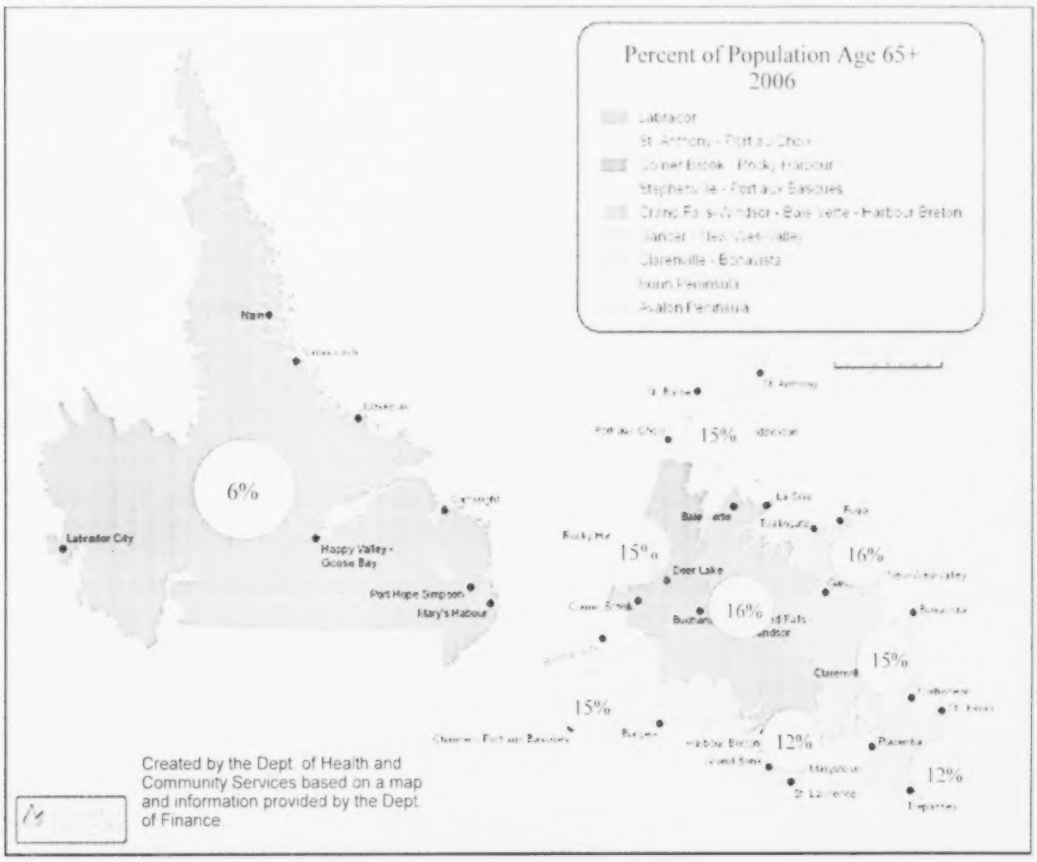
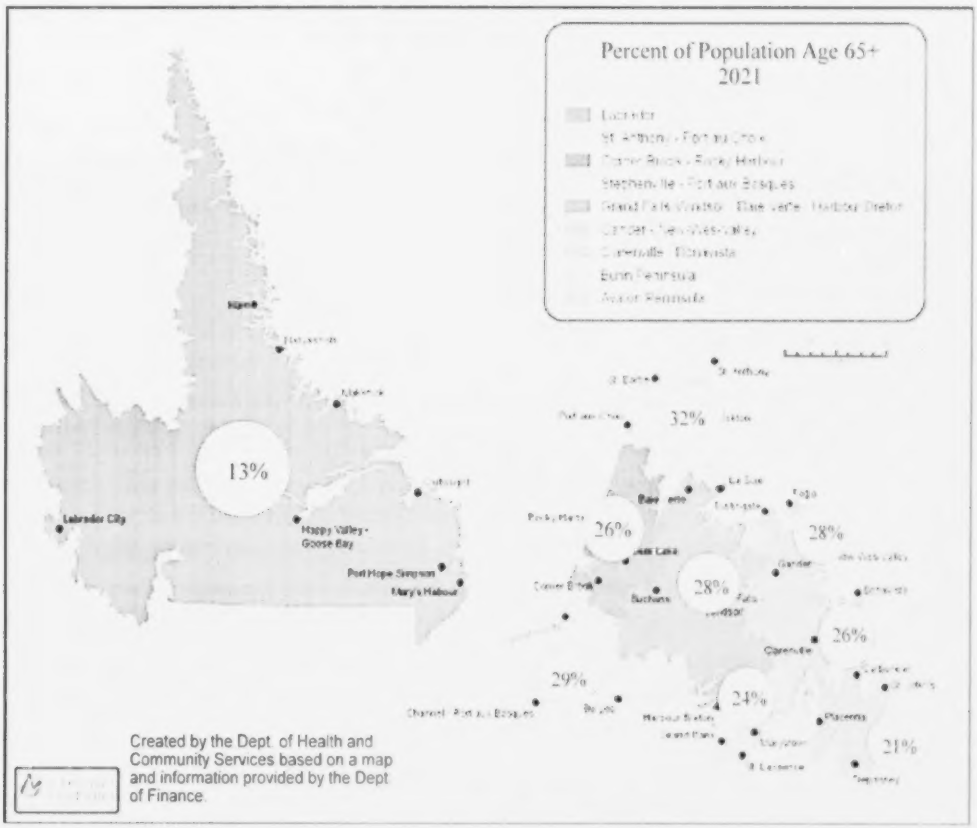


As further example, in the St. Anthony - Port au Choix region, it is expected that, by 2021, almost 32 per cent of the population will be 65 years of age or older. In contrast, in Labrador it is anticipated that only 13 per cent of the population will be 65 or older. Still, the numbers of seniors in Labrador projected for 2021, if realized, will constitute a 116 per cent increase since 2006.



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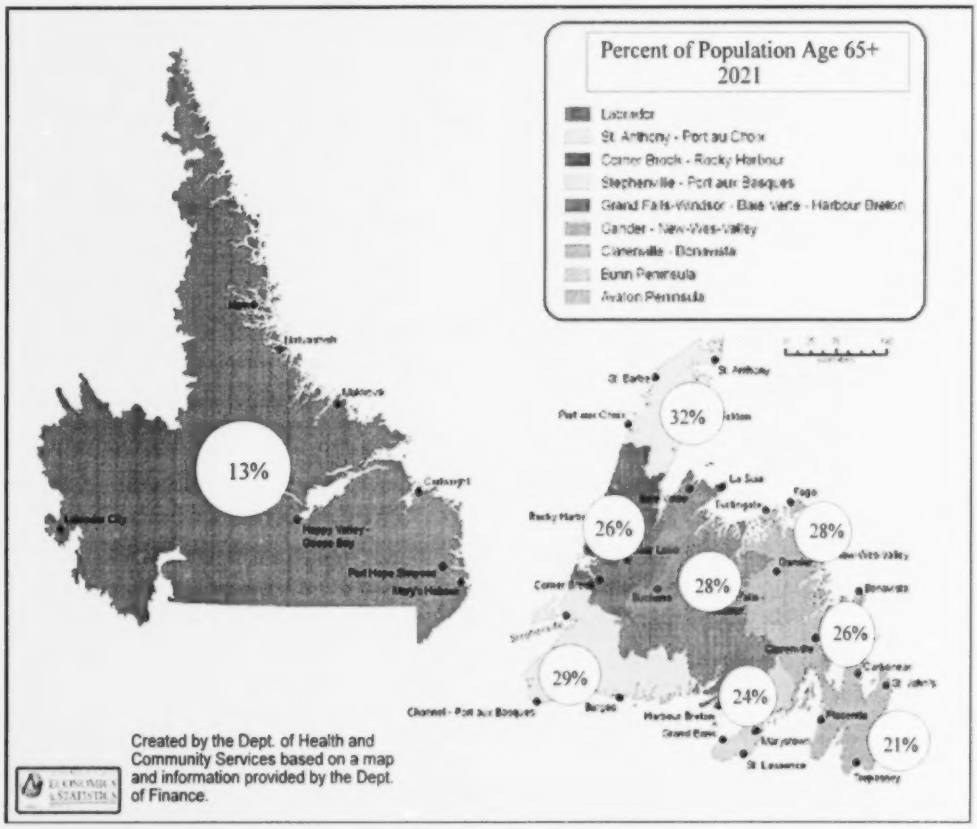


DISCUSSION THEMES

In the accompanying document entitled "Healthy Aging For All in the 21st Century - A Discussion Paper", you will notice that five themes have been identified. These themes are meant to encourage discussion and are by no means the only ideas that will come forward! This profile also uses the five themes to demonstrate the strengths and challenges of our aging population.

RECOGNITION OF OLDER PERSONS

As we are all aging, it is important that we find out some facts about the aging process. Part of this educational process involves dispelling myths and countering stereotypes.

What are some of the myths and stereotypes about aging? Here are some samples:

Myth # 1: Most older people live in institutions.

Fact: Only a small percentage of older people live in special-care homes for the aged - nursing homes, hospitals, or other long-term-care settings. Only 6.6 per cent of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador live in institutional settings.

Myth # 2: Senility is inevitable in old age.

Fact: Only a small percentage of the aged develop an irreversible brain disorder. The Alzheimer Society of Canada says that 1 in 13 Canadians over the age of 65 (8 per cent) has Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.

Stereotypes: When it comes to older people, we hold both positive and negative stereotypes.

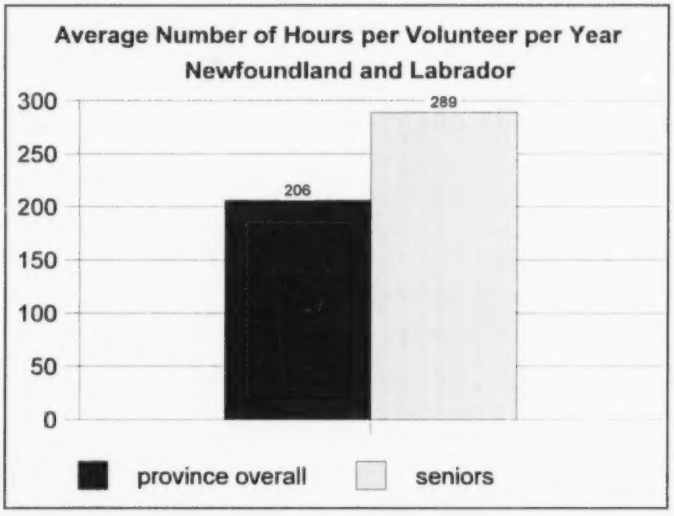
#1 The wise old fisherman
#2 The kindly grandmother
#3 The dirty old man
#4 The lonely spinster

When we dispel myths and counter stereotypes, we come closer to recognizing the strengths and contributions of older people.

SENIORS AS VOLUNTEERS

When it comes to donating their time and money, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are among the most generous and caring in the country. According to the research report published by the Canadian government, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians* (2000), the residents of this province lead the country in volunteer hours. The average volunteer from our province gives 206 hours of his or her time annually; compared to a national average of 162 hours. Provincially, 31 per cent of the population contributes their time to volunteer activities. This, again, is higher than the national average of 26.7 per cent.

The *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* conducted in 2000 indicated that fewer residents of Newfoundland and Labrador aged 60 and older volunteered, compared to other age groups in the province. However, people aged 60 and over who did volunteer contributed more hours per person (an average of 289/per person/year[2]), than any other age group in the province. Although they made up for only 11 per cent of volunteers in the province, they contributed 15 per cent[1] of all volunteer hours.



Source: Dept. of Health and Community Services based on *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating* (Statistics Canada) (2000).

[2]Sample size limits the reliability of this figure.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

Generally speaking, the diversity that exists in the population at large continues to exist as the population ages. Differences continue as we age, be they differences in ethnicity and culture, spirituality and religious practices, gender, sexual orientation, ability, geographic location, or socio-economic status, to name a few. This being said, these characteristics are not all static, or fixed. For example, levels of ability can change, as can socio-economic status.

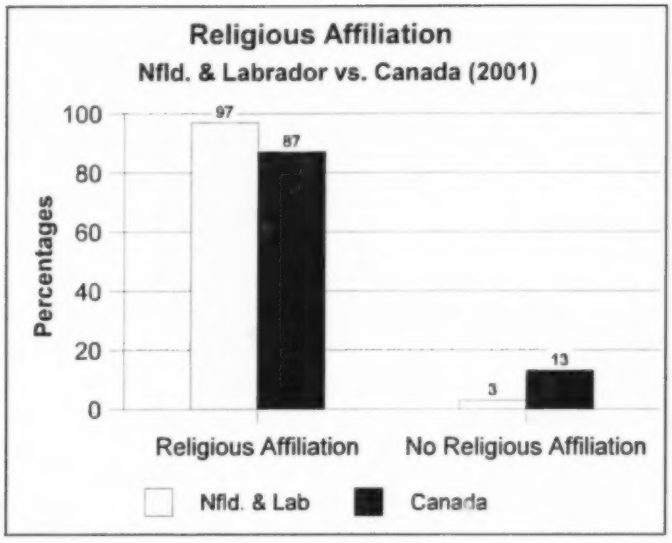
Our province is relatively homogeneous culturally, but there are some exceptions. Newfoundland and Labrador has been populated primarily by people who emigrated from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and France, in the context of the fishing industry. English is by far the most common language spoken in homes across the province (98.5 per cent); with small proportions of the population speaking French (0.6 per cent), Aboriginal languages (0.4 per cent), and other languages (0.5 per cent).

Aboriginal culture is a vital part of the province's identity. And respect for elders is very much part of that culture. The aboriginal population is approximately 18,800, that is to say, 3.7 per cent of the overall provincial population. The aboriginal population is relatively young compared to the overall population, for a variety of reasons but primarily due to a high birth rate. Seniors, or elders, aged 65+, make up 4.7 per cent of the aboriginal population.

The provincial francophone population is comprised of approximately 2300 people. The province's francophone communities are located in primarily three broad regions: the Port au Port Peninsula, Labrador, and the St. John's region.

There are, of course, people from many other ethnicities in the province. And, for several years now, the Seniors Resource Centre Association of Newfoundland and Labrador has been working with seniors of other minority ethnocultural backgrounds. A subgroup called the Seniors Bridging Cultures Club was formed. It seeks to identify the interests of seniors from various minority ethnic cultures, with a view to giving them a voice in various forums.

Cultural diversity in this province is seen through the variety of traditions and religious practices that exist throughout the province. According to the 2001 Census, 37 per cent of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador is Roman Catholic, and 60 per cent of the population is Protestant. (Included in the Protestant group are the United Church of Canada, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Pentecostal Church, the Salvation Army and other denominations.) One and a half per cent of the population is affiliated with another religion.



Only 2.5 per cent of the provincial population declared themselves to have no religious affiliation. This contrasts strikingly with the trend on the national level, as in Canada, overall, some 17 per cent of the population declared themselves to have no religious affiliation.

The chart on the left illustrates the relative importance that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians place on religious affiliation.

Source: Statistics Canada. 2001 Census.

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

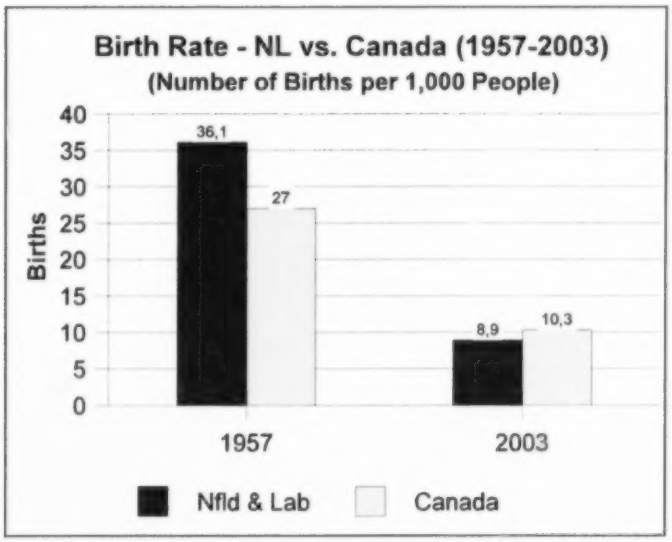
Healthy aging involves engaging the support of all community partners. It also involves taking into account the nature of our communities when we plan programs and services with the aging of the population in mind.

In considering the strengths of our communities, it is encouraging to be able to confirm that our sense of belonging to community is strong. Preliminary data from the December 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey showed that 76.5 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rate their sense of belonging to community as very, or somewhat, strong, compared to 62 per cent of Canadians.

In addition to social supports received through one's family and friends, people often receive support and services through being a member of an organization or group. Just over 50 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians aged 15 and older are members of an organization. These groups - which include organizations such as the Seniors Resource Centre and the various 50+ clubs - often play vital roles in communities.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

The structure of the typical Newfoundland and Labrador family looks very different than it did in the 1950s. Families in this province, like in the rest of Canada, tend to be small. Two-person families are the most common; they constitute 45 per cent of all Newfoundland and Labrador families. By way of example, two-person families can refer to a father and his child, just as they can refer to a senior citizen and her adult child. The average family in Newfoundland and Labrador has 1.4 children living at home, just under the national average of 1.5.



Source: CBC Archives; Dept. of Finance; Statistics Canada

In 1957, the number of live births per 1,000 people in the province was 36.1. In 2003, the provincial birth rate was 8.9. Families are definitely smaller than they used to be!

The chart on the left shows the drastic decline in the birth rate from 1957 to 2003, for Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador.

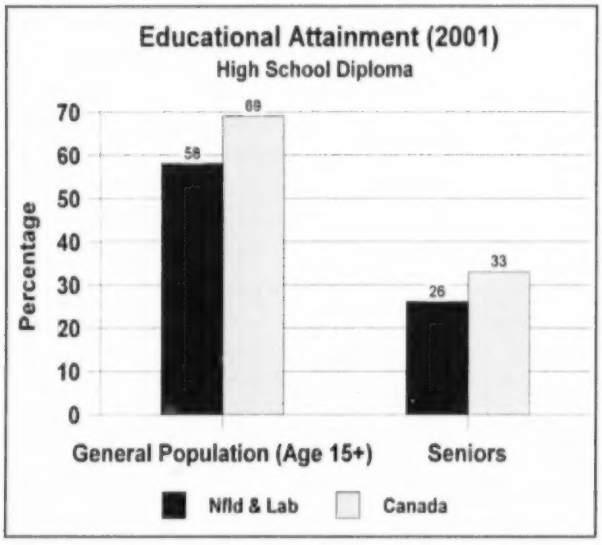
CAREGIVING

An estimated 3 million Canadians are caregivers, spanning many ages, from youth to seniors. It has been estimated that informal caregivers provide more than 80 per cent of all home care needed by people with long-term health problems.

Women continue to be the major caregivers in our province, both informal and formal. The large majority of front-line health professionals (nurses, social workers, and licensed practical nurses) are women. Women continue to provide the vast majority of personal care through home support services and unpaid support to relatives and friends. Additionally, women live longer and may require personal care themselves for longer periods of time.

EDUCATION

In 2001, 58 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians aged 15 and over had a high school diploma.The levels of education of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are less than those of the country overall. In the rest of Canada, 69 per cent of the population had a high school diploma in 2001. This difference may reflect the fact that our province has a higher proportion of seniors and these individuals are less likely to have completed high school during the 1920s and 30s.



Source: Statistics Canada (2001 Census)

The 2001 Census showed that 26 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians over 65 had a high school graduation certificate. This is compared to 43 per cent for the same age group for the country as a whole. Current rates of high school graduation mean that tomorrow's seniors will have higher levels of formal education than those of today.

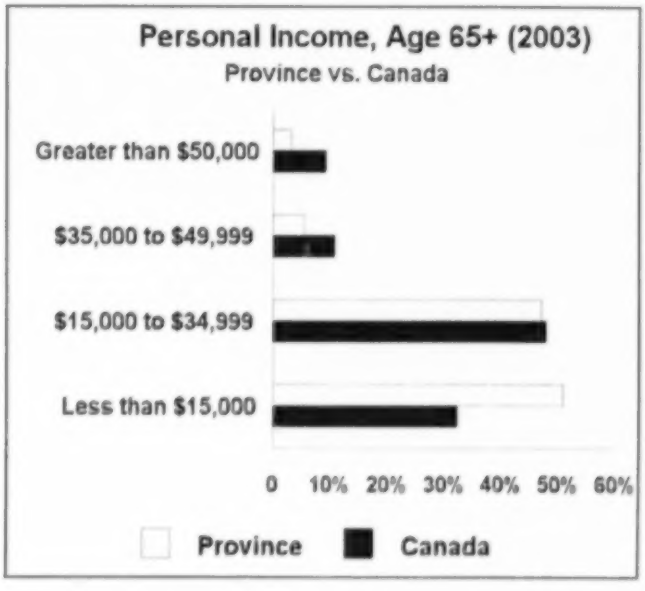
FINANCIAL AND PERSONAL SECURITY

INCOME

Financial security is an important part of healthy aging. It provides peace of mind and leads to improved mental and physical health. It allows us to access among other things, social activities, transportation, housing, and various programs and services.

Information from Statistics Canada for the year 2003 shows that the median personal income in the province was $18,100. In that same year, seniors in this province had a median personal income of $14,900, 17.5 per cent lower than that for the province as a whole. Seniors in Canada had a median income of $18,800 in 2003.

In the chart on the right, statistics from 2003 show comparisons for the percentage of seniors in various income brackets, for Newfoundland and Labrador, and Canada.



Source: Dept. of Health and Community Services; Statistics Canada

SOURCES OF INCOME

Employment

National data from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey indicate that, in 2004, the labour market participation rate for Newfoundland and Labrador, age 15 and over, was the lowest of all provinces, with 59 per cent of residents being in the labour force. This compares with the Canadian labour market participation rate of 68 per cent. In 2004, the labour market participation rate of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador was almost 4 per cent, the lowest in all of Canada. It compared to a national rate of 8 per cent.

One clear determinant of income level is educational attainment. The higher an individual's educational attainment, the greater likelihood that he or she will be in a

higher income bracket. In 2000, individuals 65 and over in Newfoundland and Labrador who had less than a high school graduation certificate and who had income in that year, had a median employment income of $10,009. This compared to a median employment income of $15,674 for those in this age group who had a university certificate, diploma or degree. During 2003, 7 per cent of Newfoundland and Labrador seniors (4,600 individuals) reported employment income.

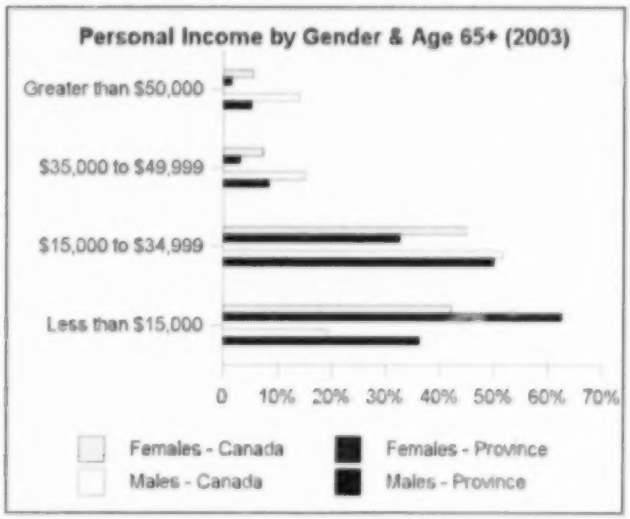
Social Transfers

Personal income includes that obtained through the various social transfers such as Old Age Security (OAS), Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and the Guaranteed Income Supplement. For the 65 + age group in this province, 62 per cent of income in 2001 was received from social transfers. This compares to 43 per cent for this age group for the country as a whole. Fifty-nine per cent of seniors' reported income was from the federal pension plans (i.e., OAS and CPP), while 22 per cent was reported from private pensions.

In December 2004, there were 67,877 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in receipt of the Old Age Security pension. Sixty-five per cent of them (44,209 seniors) also received the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Additionally, 4,267 spouses and widower/widowers of OAS clients received the income-tested Spouse's Allowance. During the same month, 70 per cent of the population age 60 and over (66,860 individuals) were in receipt of CPP.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN INCOME

Although females have made considerable progress in the area of educational attainment, significant differences still remain in levels of income. This is not specific to the province and remains an issue of national and international concern. Significantly higher proportions of females remain in the lowest income brackets and few achieve the higher incomes. As of 2003, females in the province continued to earn an average of 40 per cent less than men.



Source: Dept. of Health and Community Services; Statistics Canada

Additionally, when one looks at employment rates of the provincial population, women are about twelve per cent less likely to be employed than men. These factors have significant implications for women that continue into their senior years. In 2003, over nine per cent of senior unattached women in Newfoundland and Labrador had incomes below the low-income cut-off established for that year.

HOME OWNERSHIP

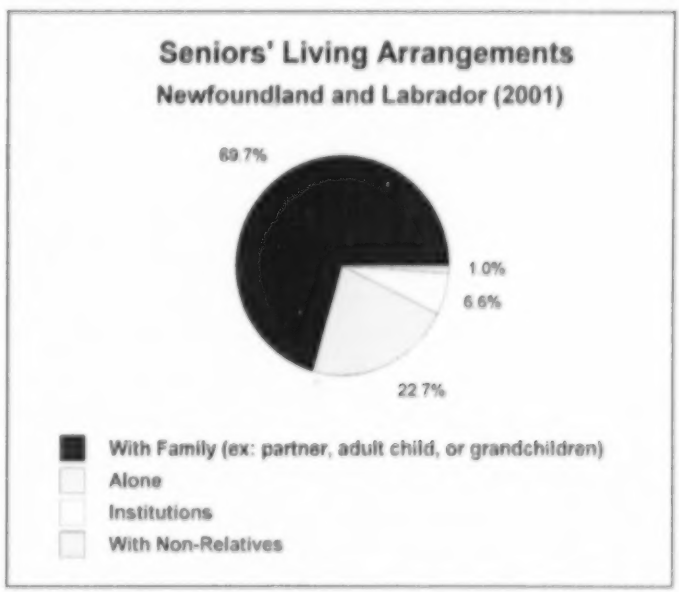
The 2001 Census found that home ownership in Newfoundland and Labrador is the highest of all provinces in the country, with 78 per cent of individuals owning their homes. This is significantly higher than the national average of 66 per cent. For those owning their homes, the average monthly payment (including mortgage, heat, light, municipal taxes, etc.) in the province was much lower than that for the country as a whole ($534 and $835, respectively). This trend also held true, although to a lesser extent, for average monthly rental payments, including heat, light and any applicable municipal taxes. Those payments were $513 per month, in this province, and $649 in Canada.

It is even more important to note that, according to the 2001 Census, 84per cent of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador owned their own home. This compared to 71per cent of seniors, in Canada overall.

SENIORS' LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

As demonstrated by the pie chart on the right, the vast majority (93per cent) of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador are living in the community, that is to say, in residences other than institutions.

It is interesting to note that the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC) supports approximately 3,900 seniors in both public and private housing.



Source: Dept. of Health and Community Services; Statistics Canada (2001 Census)

In 2004-05, there was a monthly average of approximately 2,500 seniors residing in publicly-funded long-term care facilities. These include Nursing Homes and dedicated units within Health Centres. Additionally, there was an average of 1,900 seniors residing in Personal Care Homes and Community Care Homes. Together, people living in these settings represent 6.6per cent of the seniors' population.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

LIFESTYLE

An individual's personal habits in areas such as smoking, drinking, eating, and routine exercise have been shown to have a significant impact on one's health. Results of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) (2003), which surveyed individuals age 12 and over, provide us with some insight into these areas. It is important to recognize the impact of these personal habits within our aging perspective. In fact, the provincial government is developing the Healthy Aging Framework in conjunction with a provincial Wellness Plan designed to promote good lifestyle habits. Some of the Plan's key focus areas are increasing physical activity, preventing injuries, and reducing smoking.

Routine physical activity has consistently been shown to be one way that people can achieve better overall health. The above survey found that approximately 53 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are inactive. Seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador are currently more likely to be inactive (64per cent), as compared to the population as a whole.

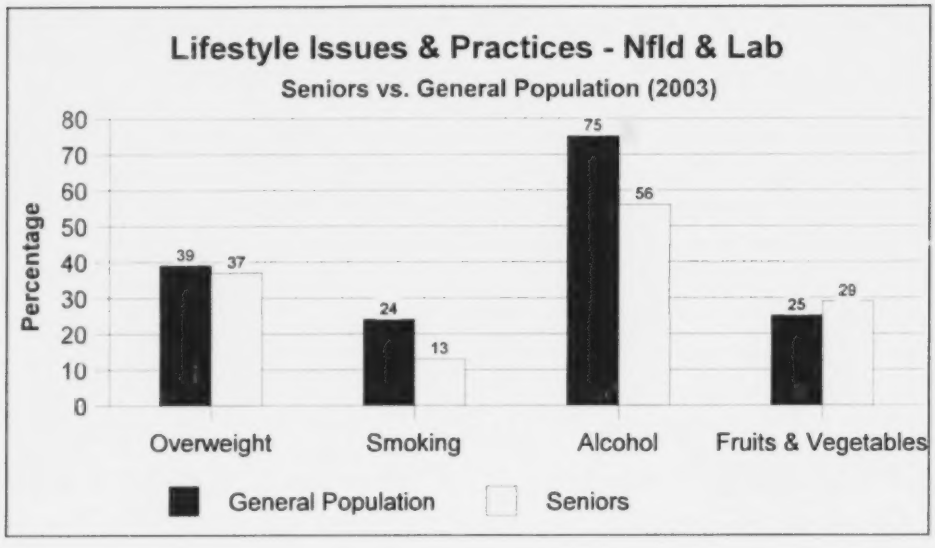
The 2003 Canadian Community Health Survey also looked at an individual's body mass index (weight/height). In Newfoundland and Labrador, males are more likely to be overweight than females (46 per cent versus 31 per cent, respectively). Furthermore, the percentage of individuals in this province who are overweight (39 per cent) is the highest in the country. Meanwhile, the percentage of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador who are overweight is 37 per cent, just less than the proportion of overweight individuals in the overall population. This is less too than the proportion of Canadian seniors that is overweight (38 per cent).

Twenty-four per cent of the survey respondents in Newfoundland and Labrador reported that they were currently smoking, compared to 23 per cent in Canada. Seniors across the province are much less likely to smoke than the general population (13 per cent vs. 24.0 per cent).

Gender differences were also seen in reported consumption of alcohol in the province, with more males than females reporting that they were heavy drinkers. While 75 per cent of the the general popuolation of Newfoundland and Labrador report regular or occasional drinking, only 56 per cent of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador report regular or occasional drinking.

With regard to healthy eating, seniors in this province are slightly more apt to consume a variety of fruits and vegetables (5-10 servings) each day, compared to the population as a whole (28 per cent vs. 25 per cent).

The table below demonstrates the differences between seniors and the general population in the province, when it comes to these lifestyle indicators.



Note: Alcohol consumption refers to regular or occasional drinking. Fruits and Vegetables: consumption of 5-10 varied servings each day.

Source: Dept. of Health and Community Services; Statistics Canada (2003)

OTHER SELF-CARE ISSUES

In 2003, 91 per cent of individuals 65 years and over in Newfoundland and Labrador reported that they had contact with medical doctors in the previous 12 months, which compared to 89 per cent for all of Canada. The percentage of Newfoundland and Labrador seniors who had contact with dental professionals over the same period (18 per cent) was much lower than the percentage of Canadian seniors who had contact with dental professionals (46 per cent).

In 2003, 46 per cent of individuals 65 years and over in Newfoundland and Labrador reported that they had influenza immunization less than one year prior, which compared to 62 per cent for all of Canada.

The National Population Health Surveys and the Canadian Community Health Surveys have found that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, not unlike Canadians in general, tend to have high self-rated health status. In 2003, 21 per cent of residents of the province rated their health as excellent (Canada: 22 per cent), 45 per cent rated it as

very good (Canada: 36 per cent), and 23 per cent rated it as good (Canada: 30 per cent).

The self-rated health status of individuals 65+ was very positive, with 12 per cent of residents of the province rating their health as excellent (Canada: 12 per cent) , 42 per cent rating it as very good (Canada: 25 per cent) , and 21 per cent rating it as good (Canada: 37 per cent) .

LIFE EXPECTANCIES AND CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

As mentioned previously, life expectancy in Newfoundland and Labrador is the lowest in the country (Newfoundland: 78 years at birth vs. Canada: 80 years at birth). As is the case across the country, women in the province tend to live longer than men (81 years vs. 75 years, respectively). However the gap is shortening.

While prevention is the best medicine, it is also important to recognize that in the aging process people do develop medical conditions that indeed require the attention of health care professionals.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
Chronic Conditions and Human Function by Age Group (2003)
(percentages)

	65+	12+
Chronic Conditions		
Arthritis/Rheumatism:	50.9	20.5
High Blood Pressure:	50.0	16.8
Diabetes:	18.7	6.4
Asthma:	8.3	9.0
Human Function		
Activity Limitation:	37.5	22.5
Pain/Discomfort Affecting Activities:	13.2	10.9

Source: Statistics Canada (2003)

With the exception of asthma, seniors in the province are much more likely to have a chronic condition or activity limitation than their younger counterparts. Most notable is the fact that 50 per cent of seniors reported having being diagnosed with arthritis/rheumatism and/or high blood pressure. This is 2.5 times the rate for the general population (age 12+).

Seniors also reported being diagnosed with diabetes at a rate almost triple that of the general population (age 12+).

Activity limitation of seniors (38 per cent) was much higher than the general population (23 per cent). Seniors also experienced a higher level of pain/discomfort (13 per cent), in comparison to the general population (11 per cent).

THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SYSTEM

Four Regional Integrated Health Authorities provide the majority of publicly-funded health and community services in the province. They aim to achieve greater collaboration in creating comprehensive and integrated programs and services on a regional basis. They focus on the full continuum of care, from health promotion and community services, to acute and long-term care. Home support services are just one example of the kinds of services provided by health authorities; approximately 1,100 seniors in the province receive subsidized home support services during any given month.

While the majority of health and community services are provided through the Regional Integrated Health Authorities, residents of the province can also avail of other health and community services offered by various professionals working outside of the regional authority structure. These include doctors of various specializations, psychotherapists, and physiotherapists, to name just a few.

A number of other organizations also provide important services, such as women's shelters and group homes.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this seniors profile is to provide readers with some baseline data regarding the seniors in our province today and those of the future. This data will help us reflect on our situation as an aging society. The data will help us identify issues and trends to inform the development of policies and programs, as we strive to proactively address the realities of our aging population. The resulting policy and program orientations will form the Healthy Aging Framework of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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